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FOR S, S/SRAP HOLBROOKE AND S/SAGSWA ROSS  
DEPARTMENT ALSO FOR NEA/FO, NEA/ARP AND NEA/IR

E.O. 12958: 03/24/2019

TAGS: [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PARM](#) [MOPS](#) [IR](#) [AF](#) [PK](#) [AE](#)

SUBJECT: ABU DHABI CROWN PRINCE REITERATES IRAN CONCERNS FOR S/SRAP  
HOLBROOKE

CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR RICHARD G. OLSON FOR REASONS 1.4 B AND D.

11. (S/NF) Summary: During a March 24 meeting with Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard Holbrooke, Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed (MbZ) expressed his grave concerns about the Iranian threat to the region. MbZ said the Iranian response to the Nowruz message was primarily for domestic consumption, but that the Iranian leadership is concerned that dialogue with the West represents a regime threat. He said Iran would obtain a nuclear weapon unless the regime could be "split from inside" before nuclear capability was achieved. Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed argued for continued Gulf consultation in conjunction with any U.S. efforts to engage Iran. (Other topics reported septel.) End Summary.

#### NOWRUZ STATEMENT

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12. (S/NF) MbZ began by telling Amb. Holbrooke that Khamenei's response to President's Nowruz statement was designed to send a message to the millions of Iranians who saw the statement on the Internet that there will be no debate on engagement with the United States and/or the West. MbZ opined that Khamenei had to deliver the message personally as an Ahmedinejad response would have fueled domestic debate. Commenting that Khamenei was conveying Iran's fundamental lack of trust in the United States, MbZ said the Iranians want an apology "for everything from Carter to Bush." He added that the uncharacteristic speed of Khamenei's response indicates the extent of the perceived threat that improved relations with the West might represent to the leadership's control over the country. Specifically, the Iranian regime fears the United States will demand the renunciation of its nuclear program, which would be politically impossible.

#### NUCLEAR WEAPONS A CERTAINTY, UNLESS REGIME FALLS

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13. (S/NF) MbZ told Holbrooke he was "100 percent" convinced Iran will complete its nuclear weapons program. He candidly stated his personal belief that negotiations with Iran were irrelevant and a military solution would only delay the program, not derail it. MbZ said that there was a "third way" between these unacceptable options: Iran is domestically very fragile, and the only way to prevent it from acquiring nuclear weapons was to "split them from inside."

14. (S/NF) Turning to his concerns about an armed confrontation, MbZ said war with Iran would only harm the UAE. He is deeply concerned that the current Israeli government will initiate military action without consultation. An Israeli attack on Iran would have little impact on Iran's capabilities, but MbZ was certain Iran would respond. MbZ argued that the leadership believes its own lies, which were "proven" by Iran's success in Basra. Today's conventional Iranian weapons would target the Gulf, while Iran continues to expand its missile program with the hope of reaching the West.

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¶5. (S/NF) UAE Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan (AbZ) stressed the importance of a continuation of the P5 plus 1 plus GCC plus 3 coordination on Iran. AbZ said that such consultation in 2008 "agitated" Iran, but sent a message to Russia and China and European allies that the Gulf is seriously concerned about Iranian hegemony. Iran's regional hegemony and nuclear program are two issues that the West cannot tackle separately. AbZ noted that countries in the region ("some friends") are concerned that the United States, especially under the current administration, would engage Iran at the expense of ties with the region. AbZ said the President's Nowruz message supported this theory. He concluded, "The more you engage Iran, the more you must engage the Gulf states." (Ambassador Olson's comment: Abdullah's reference to "friends" was Emirati politesse - the UAE is deeply concerned that we are preparing to trade, and is interpreting the Nowruz greeting in that way.)

¶6. (SBU) Ambassador Holbrooke has cleared this message.  
OLSON